DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 069 395 PS 006 113

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TITLE	Safety in the Preschool.
PUB DATE	[72]
NOTE	7p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Parent Cooperative Preschools International, 20551 Lakeshore Road, Baie d'Urfe, Quebec, Canada ($0.25, Service Bulletin No. 14P)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Cooperative Programs; Educational Environment; Equipment Standards; *Facility Requirements; *Physical Design Needs; *Preschool Education; *Safety; *School Safety; Specifications

ABSTRACT

Guidelines for safety in the cooperative preschool are outlined, emphasizing control of the physical environment to insure maximum freedom for the children compatible with maximum safety. Building standards are set for stairways, rooms, lavatories, parking lots, harmful supplies, and wading pools. Orientation for safety is discussed in regard to health, car pool rules, animals, mother assistant assignments, fire protection, civil defense, emergency cards, and emergency phone numbers. Daily school safety is stressed for children's clothing, transportation and arrival, use of both indoor and outdoor equipment, and various special events and field trips. (LH)

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SAFETY IN THE PRESCHOOL

Service Bulletin
No. 14P.....25¢

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Plymouth, Mich.

I. General Comments

The problem of safety in the cooperative preschool begins before the first session meets. In order to insure the maximum of freedom to the children compatible with the maximum of safety for the children, it is best to control the physical environment as much as possible.

As conditions of buildings and climate vary greatly, all of this may not apply to your school. Use what does.

II. The Building

The building must meet standards for air, light, heat and fire protection set by the local, state or provincial departments. Keep in mind also:

A. Stairways
1. The stairs should be well lit.
2. Avoid loose rugs at the top.
3. Have secure hand and guard rails with a lower hand rail for the children, if possible.

B. Rooms
1. If a series of rooms are used, have an adult supervising in each room at all times.
2. If the adult must leave, she should not do so until another adult is there to replace her.
3. Floors must be free from litter.
4. Arrange equipment to have traffic lanes avoid hazards.
5. Electrical appliances such as coffee pots and toasters should be placed out of the way, with no cords dangling. Never leave a cord plugged in when the appliance has been disconnected.

C. Lavatories
1. If regular size basins and toilets are used, provide low, sturdy stools for the children to use at each.
2. Beware of scalding water from the hot water tap. Some schools paint this red, or set the thermostat on the water heater on low.
3. Make sure the towels are within reach of the children so they do not have to climb.
4. Wipe up water on the floor so there are no slippery spots.
5. During wash up time, have a mother supervise.
6. All cleaning supplies and medicines should be LOCKED out of reach.

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7. If the door to the lavatory locks, make sure you have the type that can be opened from the outside.

D. Parking Lot
1. Mother assistants should park so car pools can enter and leave with ease and safety.

E. Harmful Supplies
1. These should be kept in a cupboard, out of reach, and locked, if possible.
2. These include pesticides, poisons, disinfectants, bleaches, cleaning supplies, medicines and the first-aid kit.

F. Wading Pools
Pools of all sizes must meet local requirements regarding fencing, proximity of electrical wiring, chlorine, etc.

III. Orientation for Safety

A. Health
1. The child who is disturbed, retarded or handicapped presents special situations. The teacher and assistants should be aware of the problem and the techniques used in handling these special children. If an exceptional child is admitted it should be with the knowledge and consent of the members of the cooperative, as the teacher will spend more time with this child. Nurseries who have handled this problem thoughtfully report all of the children benefitted.
2. Any contagious diseases should be reported to the Health Chairman. She may consult the local Department of Health for information on steps to take. Parents must be notified of the disease, incubation, duration and when the child will be permitted to return. Notify the teacher as well.
3. Children exposed to communicable diseases, or who show signs of illness should be kept at home.
4. Assisting parents should have physicals, and PROOF of a recent negative T.B. test before they are allowed to work.
5. Teachers, assistants or guests should not come to school if they are ill, or contagious.
6. Teachers should know first-aid procedure.
7. If a child has a temporary problem, the mother should let the teacher know. This would include temporary hearing loss, vision problems (such as new glasses), frequent nosebleeds, asthma, a new baby or death in the family, or having recently faced a new or frightening experience. Often the child will seem to be unaffected, but does exhibit unusual behaviour at school.

B. Car Pool Rules
1. The child should be thoroughly aware of car pool behaviour before school starts.
a) Stay in his seat.
b) No pushing or shoving.

c) No bothering the driver.
d) Do not touch door or window handles.
e) Fasten seat belts.

2. The driver, for her own protection, should keep her car in good repair and be covered by adequate insurance. The driver should keep the following things in mind:
   a) Have her car free from debris, rugs or blankets that could be thrown around.
   b) Never put anything on the rear window ledge. (A sudden stop will fill the car with flying objects.)
   c) Limit the number of passengers for comfort and safety.
   d) Wear leather palmed driving gloves in cold weather (cotton gloves or mittens slip too easily).
   e) Have babies and toddlers firmly fastened in.
   f) Have doors locked.
   g) Fasten seat belts.
   h) DO NOT DRIVE IF THE CHILDREN ARE MISBEHAVING. Pull off to the side, and stay there until order is restored.
   i) NEVER LEAVE THE CHILDREN UNATTENDED IN THE CAR.

3. The mother must remember that the driver has several children to care for.
   a) Have the child ready to go.
   b) Escort the child to the car.
   c) When the child is returned home, go out to the car to get him.
   d) Notify the driver if the mother will not be at home, and arrange an alternative.

C. Animals
1. If the preschool keeps a pet, keep a cold-blooded one, as they are less likely to transmit disease. Care must be taken in the disposal of wastes, as turtles carry typhoid.
2. If an animal is a "guest" for the period, have him come in a cage. Even a rabbit will bite if allowed to be mauled. NO ANIMAL SHOULD BE DISTURBED WHILE EATING. The gentlest creature has limits of patience. Keep the animal confined except for the period when the teacher will show how it moves. Have samples of what it eats and assign an adult to be on hand to help the children and the animal enjoy one another.
3. Notify the teacher when you can bring the animal to make sure it is convenient.

D. Assisting
1. The rule about mother assistants being on time should be made clear.
2. Socializing should take place at meetings. Mothers who stand around and talk are interfering with the school day.
3. Assistant assignments should be spelled out. (Mothers should have copies of various assigrments of Mother A, B, etc.) Each mother should have a card to keep handy during the session to see where she should be, and when and how to help.

If no children are in the Quiet Corner, and fifteen are in the Active Area, "Quiet Mother" should assist "Active Mother". Keep mothers where the action is.

4. Assistants who are not giving attention to their responsibilities cannot prevent accidents.
5. Assistants should keep themselves positioned so they can survey the room at all times.

E. Fire Protection

1. All should be familiar with exits and methods for getting the children out of the school. Whether or not there is a fire drill will depend upon how old the children are, and if having a drill would frighten them too much. The command word for instant obedience and action should be understood, and used ONLY in an emergency.
2. Review fire procedure during the school year.
3. Have semi-annual inspection of fire extinguishers.
4. Show everyone how to operate the fire extinguishers at one of the beginning meetings.

F. Civil Defense

In the event of a tornado, or other disaster, the steps you take will depend upon the type of building you are in, where you are in the building and how far the children are from home. Civil Defense has excellent materials available for detailed study. Each child should have an "emergency home" where he can be sent if his parents are away. Evacuation procedure, including exits to use, should be posted in the nursery.

G. Emergency Cards

A current file should be kept in a convenient location, perhaps by the phone. Each member should know where the file is kept. The information on each child should include: child's name; mother's name and phone number; father's name, business address and phone number; emergency home name, address and phone (it is best to have two); family doctor's name, address and phone; hospital preference, address and phone. Leave space for allergies or special information.

H. Emergency Phone Numbers

These should be posted by the phone. When needed they must be instantly available. These numbers are: school doctor, ambulance, poison control center, hospital emergency ward, fire, police, local utilities especially gas and electric companies.

IV. Safety Every School Day

A. Preparing the Child for School

1. Clothing should permit play with comfort and safety.
   a) Encourage self-help (boxer pants, large buttons).
   b) Dresses, if allowed, should be simple and without ruffles to catch in wheels.
   c) Dress prepared to paint or enjoy messy clay.
   d) Shoes should be rubber-soled and sturdy.

2. Outer garments should be large enough to get off and on with ease (snow pants should go on with shoes on).
3. Boots and rubbers should be small enough not to slip and large enough to go on with ease. (Squirt silicone spray inside stubborn boots. It lasts two or three days each squirt).

B. Arrival at School
1. Car driver escorts children to the room and waits until the teacher acknowledges arrivals. The driver leaves quietly.
2. Mother assistants help remove outer clothes, if necessary.
3. Teacher is stationed to greet each child as he arrives.
4. The child should at no time be unsupervised. Someone must know where he is at all times.

C. Indoor Equipment
1. The Active Area
a) Climbing equipment should be sturdy and have a low center of gravity. It should be free from splinters, snags or burrs. (Hold a stocking and rub over to spot snags). Bolts and nuts should be secure, and there should be no rocking.
b) Tricycles should be oiled, be free from burrs and not tip easily.
c) Blocks must be free from splinters.
d) Trucks should have no bits of bent metal.
2. With electric powered devices such as buzzer boxes or doorbells, see that there are no exposed wires and that the device is grounded to prevent shock. Avoid long dangling cords.
3. Workshop
a) Hammers have heads on firmly.
b) Screw drivers have handles on firmly, and no burrs.
c) Saws have handles on firmly, and be well sharpened.
d) Have a clamp or a vice to hold the wood while working, especially when sawing.
e) Use soft wood to work with, such as pine.
f) Flat headed nails, such as roofing nails, are best. (Hold nails steady between the teeth of an old comb to save fingers).
g) If nails stick through the wood, pound them over so they are flat.
h) When pounding or sawing, have the child stand at the bench.
i) Tools belong by the workbench, not all over the preschool.
4. Housekeeping or Play House
a) Furniture should be low, sturdy and without splinters.
b) Dishes should be of unrusted metal, Melmac, or soft plastic. Polystryene shatters dangerously.
c) Pots and pans should be free from burrs and ragged edges.
d) Stuffed animals must have non-toxic stuffing, and no leaks.
e) NO DRINKING FROM DISHES OR CUPS.

5. Quiet Corner
   a) Avoid toxic substances. (colorforms are poison).
   b) Keep the edges of puzzles sanded smooth.
6. Painting and Messy Area
   a) Keep paint in plastic cups.
   b) Keep puddles wiped up.
   c) Have no loose papers on the floor to slip on. (You may have papers under the easles to simplify clean-up).
   d) NO SAND-THROWING at the sand table. (There is a variety of sand, masons' sand, which is fine and has rounded grains. This is less likely to cause eye or intestine damage. Sand-eating can cause severe problems requiring hospitalization).

D. Outdoor Equipment
1. Make the same checks as for indoor equipment.
2. Grounds must be free from sticks, glass, stones and toxic plants.
3. Under climbers use grass, if possible, sand if you are in a dry climate, or tanbark or sawdust.
4. Assistants must go out with the children. Allow no climbing unless an adult is stationed there.

E. Leaving School
1. Driver collects her group, notifying the teacher she is taking them.
2. Children go to car together.
3. See Car Pool Rules.

V. Special Events

A. New situations require more supervision than usual. These are:
1. The beginning of the school year until the children are adjusted.
2. Parties of any sort.
3. When new equipment is added.

B. Special Events in the School
1. Cooking and baking are untidy, but rewarding and fun. Perhaps because it is so routine for the mothers, safety rules are often ignored.
   a) Run a safety check on the kitchen to be sure that all poisons and cleaning compounds are out of reach.
   b) Add an extra assisting mother.
   c) Remember to turn pot handles to the side.
   d) Use short cords on appliances.
   e) Never touch two appliances at the same time.
   f) Never drop anything into hot liquid or fat.
   g) Use special care so that grease does not spatter.
   h) Soups are easy and fun. Bring the stock to a boil, carefully lower the vegetables with a spoon, and simmer briefly. This tastes better, and is much safer.
   i) Ice cream is the favourite thing to make. Care must be taken that the electric freezer is well grounded and that water from the melting ice is contained to avoid

shock. No licking the container - tongues will stick.

j) With baking, the children enjoy watching breads, cookies and muffins rise and brown. Small groups can peek into the oven to see - with an adult to supervise.

Caution: Uncooked baker's yeast can cause havoc with digestion. NEVER ALLOW A CHILD TO EAT ANY UNCOOKED YEAST DOUGH. Have them wash carefully after handling yeast dough.

2. Visitors who have some talent to offer or some job to explain should be aware of the needs and limits of the age group. They should handle their own equipment.

C. Field Trips

The preschool should have a field trip chairman for each group. She has a variety of duties:

1. Plan trips and make any special arrangements.
2. Preview the site for suitability (Have you ever lifted four children to look into thirty-five tanks of fish?)
3. Get enough adults to help supervise (one adult for every two to four children, depending upon age, how long school has been in session, hazards at the site).
4. Assign his own mother to a child that requires special supervision.
5. Have name tags for each child, color keyed for sub-groups, with his name, school and phone number.
6. See that the cars get off on time, that the drivers have maps, and that the drivers keep to the schedule.
7. Keep in mind that long drives or extended trips are difficult for the children.

These suggestions may sound like a lot of negatives, but there is a positive effect - a safer, happier preschool situation for the children. With a little practice these rules become second nature, and everyone can breathe easily while keeping alert for occasions that can cause trouble. To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, "Eternal vigilance is the price of safety".